Uncovering the Nymphomaniac

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Uncovering the Nymphomaniac – the Verbum גלה and Exile as Sexual Violence in Ezek 16 and 23

1. Images of Exile in Ezekiel

In 1968, Peter Ackroyd, the late Samuel Davidson Professor of Old Testament Studies at King's College, London, published his influential monograph "Exile and Restoration".[1] In this study, Ackroyd differentiates between exile as events, referring to the historical episode, and exile as thought, the literary interpretation of the events.[2] While the Babylonian exile following the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE – and to a smaller extent the Assyrian exile after 722 BCE –was a common, small-scale military measure to assure compliancy of a seized nation, the event had a major impact on the literary activity in the Hebrew Bible and led to the composition and formation of wide parts of the biblical books. Therein, the elaboration of the motif "should not only be viewed as an echo of traumatic historical events, but also as a literary theme that is taken up and reworked in a variety of ways by the biblical authors in order to rebuild specific identities and to express ideology."[3]

The book of Ezekiel is a model example for the variety of images of exile that exist in biblical literature. First of all, the book is shaped by a framework narrative that introduces the Babylonian exile as a hermeneutical key for the prophetic message. The biblical prophet is presented as a member of the so-called first golah, the Israelites that went into Babylonian exile together with King Jehoiachin in 597 BCE (Ezek 1:1–3; 3:10–15). Ezekiel predicts the imminent fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE, which entails judgement on the remaining inhabitants, king Zedekiah, and the land (Ezek 4–24). When finally, in 33:21, news about the fall of Jerusalem reach the exiles in Babylon, Ezekiel starts to prophesy salvation (Ezek 34–39), which culminates in the final vision of the New Jerusalem (Ezek 40–48). Further images of exile in the book are closely linked with this framework narrative such as the idea of exile as a separation from the homeland that requires gathering and return (34:11–15; 36:23bβ–32; 37:11–14, 20–23; 39:23–29), exile symbolized as a valley full of dry bones (37:1–10), or the correlation of Jerusalem's fall and

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[1] P. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century BC* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968).

[2] See Ackroyd, *Exile* (see FN 1), 14.

[3] A. K. d. H. Gudme and I. Hjelm, "Introduction" in *Myths of Exile: History and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. A. K. d. H. Gudme and I. Hjelm; CIS; London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 1–10, 3–4.

its final rebuilding and glory (Ezek 33:21; 40–48). In this contribution, I would like to focus on a literary theme that has been rather neglected in the discussion of exile, namely exile in the image of sexual violence in Ezek 16 and 23. While these two chapters are usually understood as allegories of biblical history, and while their use of the so-called "marriage metaphor"[4] for the relationship between Yhwh and a female figure has attracted much attention,[5] they have not yet been questioned for their specific view on exile. By deciphering the allegory, it can be shown that the exile in Ezek 16 and 23 is illustrated by sexual violence, displaying how the female figure is stripped naked, humiliated and raped (16:37; 23:10, 29). The imagery becomes even more gruesome, as Yhwh himself takes the role of the vengeful husband, who exerts violence (16:37), or who exposes his wife to violence by the hands of her former lovers (23:10, 29).

In the following, I want to demonstrate that this specific image of exile traces back to the two meanings of the Hebrew verb גלה, which denotes both "to uncover" and "to go away", the latter with the specific connotation "to go into exile". While the first part of my argument will focus on the semantic background of the lemma גלה and its use in the book of Ezekiel, the second part offers textual observations on the two chapters Ezek 16 and 23. Both use the metaphor of the unfaithful wife to describe biblical history, and I want to make the case that in both texts, the exile is depicted as sexual violation of the female figure. It is precisely the double meaning of the Hebrew root גלה that offers the key for the link between sexual violence and exile, and the third part of my paper will trace the literary origins of this exegetical

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[4] On term and concept see especially the monograph by G. Baumann, *Love and Violence: Marriage as Metaphor for the Relationship between Yhwh and Israel in the Prophetic Books* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003).

[5] Especially feminist scholarship has contributed greatly to the understanding of the imagery and our dealings with these texts, see e.g. M. E. Shields, "Multiple Exposures: Body Rhetoric and Gender Characterization in Ezekiel 16," *JFSR* 14 (1998): 5–18; J. Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel: The City as Yahweh's Wife* (SBLDS 130; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992); F. v. Dijk-Hemmes, "The Metaphorization of Woman in Prophetic Speech: An Analysis of Ezekiel XXIII," *VT* 43 (1993): 162–170; C. Maier, "Jerusalem als Ehebrecherin in Ezechiel 16: Zur Verwendung und Funktion einer biblischen Metapher," in *Feministische Hermeneutik und Erstes Testament: Analysen und Interpretationen* (ed. H. Jahnow et alii; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1994), 85–105; R. Weems, *Battered Love: Marriage, Sex, and Violence in the Hebrew Prophets* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995); L. Day, "Rhetoric and Domestic Violence in Ezekiel 16," *BibInt* 8 (2000): 205–230.

See also my forthcoming publication on "Clothing, Nudity, and Shame in the Book of Ezekiel and Prophetic Oracles of Judgement," in *Handbook on Clothing and Nudity in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. C. Berner, S. Schulz, M. Schott, and M. Weingärtner; London: T&T Clark, 2018), which has been written at the same time as the current contribution and shows significant overlap.

transformation. I want to suggest that the productive growth of the short prophecies in Jer 13:18–27 represents the literary birthplace for the motif that is then followed up in the two allegories in Ezek 16 and 23. Finally, the concluding remarks reflect on the notion of exile in these texts and some reading strategies for a present understanding.

2. The Lemma גלה and its Use in Ezekiel

As already mentioned, the Hebrew verbal root גלה occurs with two main meanings: the first one (גלה I) describes the aspect of uncovering ("to uncover"), while the second meaning (גלה II) refers to a change of location ("to go away"), which accounts for the specific meaning of "to go into exile".[6] Nearly all Semitic languages have related roots that feature similar connotations.[7] In Biblical Hebrew, the two basic meanings occur in more than one *binyan*, even though *qal* is the only *binyan* with a considerable number of examples, attesting to both meanings and the specific exilic connotation of גלה II ("to go into exile"). The understanding of uncovering (גלה I) dominates the *pi^{c}el binyan* and, with a few exceptions, the *niph^{c}al.* The verb by itself does not carry a sexual connotation, but mainly in these two *binyans*, the verb can occur in combination with specific markers to denote a sexual understanding.[8] A clear case constitutes the combination of גלה *pi^{c}el* with the noun עֶרְוָה that in priestly texts denotes sexual intercourse ("to sleep with", see Lev 18:6–19; 20:11, 17–21).[9] While the few occurrences in the *pu^{c}al* and *hitpa^{c}el binyan* are difficult to determine, and can be disregarded, in the remaining causative *binyans*, the exilic application of גלה II prevails. Firstly, the *hiph^{c}il* implies already by its basic function the aspect of something implemented from the outside,[10] which translates into "to take into exile" or

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[6] See in detail J. Kiefer, *Exil und Diaspora. Begrifflichkeit und Deutungen im Antiken Judentum und in der Hebräischen Bibel* (ABG 19; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2005), 115–118; further C. Westermann and R. Albertz, Art. "גלה," *THAT* (1984): 418–426, 419; H.-J. Zobel, Art. "גלה," *TDOT* 2 (1975): 476–488, 477; Baumann, *Love* (see FN 5), 46–52.

[7] See Kiefer, *Exil* (see FN 6), 110–115.

[8] See Baumann, *Love* (see FN 5), 47.

[9] The expression occurs further in Ezek 22:10 in the context of an accusation of the ruling class, who are guilty of "uncovering the nakedness of the father" (עֶרְוַת־אָב גִּלָּה־בָךְ). This accusation refers to the sexual taboo of engaging in sexual intercourse with their own mother, thus violating the nakedness reserved for one's father (see D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24* [NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 710; further W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Prophet Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24* [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979]). M. Fishbane, Biblical *Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 293, has shown that the accusation in Ezek 22:10 is formulated drawing on the priestly laws found in Lev 20:10–18.

[10] See in detail Kiefer, *Exil* (see FN 6), 124–125.

"to deport", with the few occurrences of the *hoph^{c}al binyan* covering the passive aspect ("to be deported").[11]

In the book of Ezekiel, the Hebrew verb occurs fourteen times in four different *binyans*.[12] Most occurrences testify to the meaning of גלה I ("to uncover"), with a concentration of six cases in the two allegorical chapters Ezek 16 and 23 (16:36, 37, 57; 23:10, 18, 29). With the exception of 16:57, there is sufficient evidence to suggest a sexual understanding. To start with 16:37 and 23:10, the combination of גלה *pi^{c}el* with the object עֶרְוָה describes sexual intercourse that in both cases is forced upon the female figure. While in 16:37, it is the metaphorical husband Yhwh himself, who consummates the rape, in 23:10, he exposes the woman to gang-rape by the hands of her former lovers. The *pi^{c}el* verbal form in 23:18, however, describes how the wife commits adultery by engaging in sexual intercourse with her lovers. Finally, in 16:36 and 23:29, the syntactic combination of the verb גלה with the noun עֶרְוָה also has a sexual connotation, but in these cases the noun עֶרְוָה is subject to the *niph^{c}al* verb in the sense of "to be uncovered/to be exposed".[13] While 16:36 comprises a charge of promiscuity against the female figure, the context in 23:29 suggests another instance of gang-rape. Finally, 16:57 attests to a figurative use, describing the offenses of the woman in terms of her wickedness being uncovered (תִּגָּלֶה רָעָתֵךְ).[14] To sum up, five out of six occurrences of the verb גלה in Ezek 16 and 23 refer to sexual intercourse, with 16:37; 23:10 and 23:29 suggesting an act of sexual violence against the female figure.

With regard to גלה II, there are only four references in the book, all of which attest to the specific exilic connotation of the verb: In Ezek 12:3, an imperative *qal*, followed by a *perfect consecutivum* is used to summon the prophet to symbolize the deportation into exile (וּגְלֵה ... וְגָלִיתָ) by making up his baggage, while in 39:23, the nations shall know that it is due to the iniquities of the house of Israel that they had to go into exile (כִּי בַעֲוֹנָם גָּלוּ בֵּית־

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[11] See the dictionary entries in HALAT, 192; D. J. A. Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew: Vol. 2:* ב – ו [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995], 351–352; Gesenius[18], 216–217.

[12] *Qal*: 12:3 (2); 39:23; *niph^{c}al*: 13:14, 16:36, 57; 21:29; 23:29; *pi^{c}el*: 16:37; 22:10; 23:10, 18 (2); *hiph^{c}il*: 39:28.

[13] On the passive sense of the verb גלה in the *niph^{c}al binyan* see Baumann, *Love* (see FN 5), 46–52.

[14] In 16:57, a few Hebrew Manuscripts attest to a variant reading of ערותך instead of רעתך, which, however, can be explained as *lectio facilior*, as it matches the expression in 16:57 with the previous use of the verb גלה in the chapter (see 16:36, 37); on the preference for the MT reading see also Block, *Ezekiel 1–24* (see FN 9), 511; L. C. Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19* (WBC 28; Dallas: Word Books, 1994), 226; K.-F. Pohlmann, *Der Prophet Hesekiel/Ezechiel: Kapitel 1–19* (ATD 22,1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1996), 219; differently, Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (see FN 9), 332, argues that 16:57 should be read in conjunction with 16:36, 37.

יִשְׂרָאֵל). Finally, the recognition formula in 39:28 aims at Yhwh's own people, who shall recognize him as their god, who led them into exile (בְּהַגְלוֹתִי אֹתָם אֶל־הַגּוֹיִם), and who will gather them into their own land. Furthermore, some nominal derivations of the root גלה should be considered, which in the prophetic book refer exclusively to the deportation into exile. Firstly, the noun גָּלוּת describes the implementation of the verb, which translates into "exile/exiles".[15] The lemma is used most notably in the framework narrative in Ezek 1:2; 33:21, and 40:1, dating the events in relation to the deportation of the first golah under King Jehoiachin. Secondly, the noun גּוֹלָה, which goes back to a feminine participle, denotes the corresponding collective group ("the exiles") and has led to the abstraction "the deportation, exile/the deported, exiles".[16] The noun occurs exclusively in the first parts of the book (Ezek 1:1; 3:11, 15; 11:24, 25; 12:3, 4, 7, 11; 25:3).

This overview has demonstrated that the verb גלה is used with both its basic meanings in the book, while especially its derivatives have adopted the function as *terminus technicus* for the deportation of the first golah. However, our focus will be on the use of גלה I in Ezek 16 and 23, and especially its understanding in terms of sexual violence, connoting that a female figure is exposed to sexual violation. I want to argue that the use of גלה in both chapters is a conscious play with the two meanings of the root to deploy sexual violence as an image of exile.

3. Textual Observations

3.1. From Abandoned Child to Nymphomaniac Woman: Ezek 16

The chapter Ezek 16 puts forward an "extended metaphor"[17] of Yhwh as husband and personified Jerusalem as his female partner, who is unfaithful to him. At the beginning, Jerusalem is introduced as an abandoned baby girl, of whom Yhwh takes care, and whom he later marries, once the girl has come of age. Even though the wife is richly blessed by her husband, she develops a nymphomaniac attraction to other lovers and is punished severely for her misbehaviour. The whole chapter is shaped as a continuous address of the female figure by Yhwh, associating the context of a judicial speech,[18] in which the husband accuses his wife of adultery and adjudicates judgement. As the female's fate in the narrative represents biblical history, explaining the fall of Jerusalem and the ensuing exile as punishment for the unfaithfulness of the people, the genre of the chapter is mainly understood

[15] See Kiefer, *Exil* (see FN 6), 145.

[16] See Kiefer, *Exil* (see FN 6), 126–133.

[17] Shields, "Multiple Exposures" (see FN 5), 5; on this genre classification see further Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19* (see FN 14), 233; Galambush, *Jerusalem* (see FN 5), 11, and Day, "Violence" (see FN 5), 205.

[18] On this genre characteristics in Ezek 16 see Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (see FN 9), 333, 335.

as an allegory.[19] Ezek 16 shares the opposition between fairy-tale election and later downfall with the allegories in Ezek 19* and 31*, which are usually counted among the oldest texts in the book.[20] However, the high level of theological reflection in Ezek 16 rather speaks for a later origin in comparison with these texts.[21] The present chapter divides into three parts. Following the word-introduction-formula in verse 16:1, the first part in 16:2–43 comprises a metaphorical review of biblical history, symbolised by the fate of the adulterous woman Jerusalem; it has later been supplemented with the fate of her sisters Sodom and Samaria in 16:44–58, and a prospect of salvation in 16:59–63.[22]

The original oracle starts with a description of the woman's childhood years in 16:2–14, when Yhwh finds the helpless and naked baby girl "flailing about in her blood" (16:6: מִתְבּוֹסֶסֶת בְּדָמָיִךְ). Yhwh takes pity upon the girl and commands her to live (16:6), and under his protection and care, the child grows up, until her time has come for "love" (16:8: וְהִנֵּה עִתֵּךְ עֵת דֹּדִים). Here, the Hebrew text provides us with sufficient evidence to assume that Yhwh takes her to be his wife and – staying in the imagery – most likely consummates the marriage.[23] However, the picture of marital bliss changes to that of a broken marriage in the following section 16:15–34. Instead of

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[19] It is usually acknowledged that Ezek 16 assembles different form elements, whereby, however, the "extended" use of the marriage metaphor and the overall form of an allegory stand out; see in detail Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (see FN 9), 333–336; Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19* (see FN 14), 232–235; Pohlmann, *Ezechiel 1–19* (see FN 14), 221; H. Lipka, *Sexual Transgression in the Hebrew Bible*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006, 223, and, with special emphasis on the allegorical character, Th. Krüger, *Geschichtskonzepte im Ezechielbuch* (BZAW 180; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1989), 139–198.

[20] Thus Pohlmann, *Ezechiel 1–19* (see FN 14)*, 292–297.*

[21] On the possibilities to relate these three chapters, see Pohlmann, *Ezechiel 1–19* (see FN 14), 220–221; after the analysis of Ezek 16*, he comes to the conclusion that Ezek 16* most likely originated in the context of his so-called "older prophetic book" ("älteres Prophetenbuch"; see Pohlmann, *Ezechiel 1–19* [see FN 14], 230), or represents an even later addition, which suggests that Ezek 16* dates after both Ezek 19* and 31*.

[22] See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (see FN 9), 333–334; Krüger, *Geschichtskonzepte* (see FN 19), 325–332; Pohlmann, *Ezekiel 1–19* (see FN 14), 221. However, there is also evidence to suggest that the basic oracle in 16:1–43 contains later additions; it is especially the question what the female figure is accused of originally that gives rise to literary-critical operation. Both Zimmerli and Pohlmann reconstruct an original text, in which the accusations against the female figure remain general, charging her with harlotry and unfaithfulness, while both deem the specific charges of cultic (16:16–21) and political infidelity (16:26, 28–29) to be later supplementations (see Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* [see FN 9], 333–353, and Pohlmann, *Ezechiel 1–19* [see FN 14], 216–234).

[23] On the presence of marriage imagery in Ezek 16:8 see Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (see FN 9), 229; Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19* (see FN 14), 238; Block, *Ezekiel 1–24* (see FN 9), 482–483. Day, "Violence" (see FN 5), 208, is clear about the consummation of the marriage in Ezek 16:8: "Sexual activity seems to be clearly suggested by these actions".

being faithful to her husband Yhwh, who discharges his marital commitments and lavishly provides his wife with expensive garments and jewellery (16:9–14), the wife bestows her promiscuous favours on everyone who passes by (16:15). Her sexual desire even leads to a perverted praxis of prostitution, when she pays her lovers instead of accepting payment in exchange for the sexual intercourse (16:33–34). Further to the accusations of adulteress behaviour, the woman is also accused of cultic offenses: She sacrifices her children (16:20–21), builds herself high places for worship (16:16, 24–25) and worships idols made of the provisions given to her by her husband (16:15–19).[24]

The announcement of judgement in 16:35–43 is from the start formulated with specific reference to the alleged 'crimes' of the female figure, employing her nakedness as an image of judgement. Thus, the pronouncement starts from a back-reference in 16:36 that makes her sexual involvement with her lovers the cause for her being sexually violated by her husband: "Because … your nakedness was uncovered (16:36: יַעַן … וַתִּגָּלֶה עֶרְוָתֵךְ) …, therefore … I will uncover your nakedness to them (16:37: וְגִלֵּיתִי עֶרְוָתֵךְ אֲלֵהֶם)." Not only the specific use of the verb גלה *pi*^{c}*el* in 16:37, but also the literary context is evidence that the punishment goes beyond a simple stripping. First, the act of stripping is mentioned separately in 16:37b and 16:39, where the woman is undressed with the intention of exposing her nakedness and thus humiliating her.[25] Secondly, we concluded that the combination of גלה *pi*^{c}*el* with the noun עֶרְוָה clearly denotes sexual intercourse, and if this understanding is applied on Ezek 16:37, then the imagery describes sexual intercourse that is forced upon the female figure.[26] From a present understanding, this constitutes an act of rape, which is – in the imagery of the metaphor – carried out by the divine husband himself.[27] Further analogies between the punitive

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[24] There is some evidence to suggest that the cultic accusations are later additions, see on this FN 22.

[25] On this argument see also Baumann, *Love* (see FN 5), 155.

[26] On this understanding see Shields, "Multiple Exposures" (see FN 5), 15–16; Baumann, *Love* (see FN 5), 154–155; more tentatively, Lipka, *Sexual Transgression* (see FN 19), 152. Even though the terminological parallels between Ezek 16:37 and the texts in Leviticus are widely recognised, most exegetes interpret the scene in 16:37 as an act of exposing for the purpose of humiliation rather than an act of bodily violation; see e.g. Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19* (see FN 14), 242 ("The public exposure of the naked body was a symbolic act of legal punishment for adulterers"); Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 286 ("public degradation of a harlot"), and Block, *Ezekiel 1–24* (see FN 9), 501–502 ("recalls a divorce ritual").

[27] On the question, if we can assume an understanding of 'rape' in the Ancient Near East see F. R. Magdalene, "Ancient Near Eastern Treaty-Curses and the Ultimate Texts of Terror: A Study of the Language of Divine Sexual Abuse in the Prophetic Corpus," in *The Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets* (The Feminist Companion to the Bible 8; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 326–352, 328–341.

sanctions and previous actions on part of the metaphorical wife serve to paint the picture of a deserved punishment, which is reinforced in the husband's statement that his judgement follows a standard set of rules, the "laws for female adulterers and murderers" (16:38: מִשְׁפְּטֵי נֹאֲפוֹת וְשֹׁפְכֹת דָּם).

The first major continuation in 16:44–58 starts from the proverb "like mother, like daughter" (16:44: כְּאִמָּה בִּתָּהּ) and introduces the personified cities Samaria and Sodom as sisters of the main female protagonist Jerusalem. Even though Samaria and Sodom are shown to be equally guilty of committing abominations, the comparison aims at demonstrating that Jerusalem's offenses easily surpass those of her 'sisters in crime' (16:47).[28] It is in this continuation, that the verb גלה occurs for the third time in the context of a reproachful reminder to the female figure that she considered herself superior of her sister Sodom (16:56), before her own wickedness was uncovered (בְּטֶרֶם תִּגָּלֶה רָעָתֵךְ).[29] Apparently, the expression recalls the sexual nature of Jerusalem's own transgressions and punishment in the first part, but entails a wider moral judgement. Finally, the latest continuation of the chapter in 16:59–63 comprises a prospect on salvation and introduces a conciliatory note, when Yhwh promises that he will establish an everlasting covenant with Jerusalem (16:60, 62). However, the last verse of the chapter "emphasizes a sober concern for Israel's continued repentance",[30] as the covenant promise is supplemented with the admonition that the woman should feel shame and be silent because of her disgrace (16:63: וָבֹשְׁתְּ ... מִפְּנֵי כְלִמָּתֵךְ).[31]

In summary, the review of biblical history especially in the first part 16:1–43 goes far beyond a simple metaphor with one comparison point. Rather, the metaphorical imagery has an allegorical dimension by using the fate of the female figure to depict biblical history. Therein, the female figure can be understood in a narrow sense as symbolizing the city Jerusalem, which, however, relates to the people and the nation as a whole.[32] Thus, the rescue of the abandoned child clearly recalls the election of Israel in its beginnings, while the act

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[28] Thus Maier, "Jerusalem" (see FN 5), 100: "Der Vergleich mit Sodom und Samaria zielt auf die Schuld Jerusalems als einer Steigerung der Vergehen."

[29] On the reading see above FN 14.

[30] Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19* (see FN 14), 233.

[31] The fact that Jerusalem feels shame only after Yhwh has forgiven her and provided for a new beginning, suggests that shame together with being silenced denotes the culmination of the divine punishment, leaving the woman humbled and voiceless (see J. Stiebert, *The Construction of Shame in the Hebrew Bible: The Prophetic Contribution* [JSOTS 346; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002], 159).

[32] On the specific relation between the personification of Zion/Jerusalem and the people see O. H. Steck, "Zion als Gelände und Gestalt: Überlegungen zur Wahrnehmung Jerusalems als Stadt und Frau im Alten Testament," in *Gottesknecht und Zion: Gesammelte Aufsätze zu Deuterojesaja* (by O. H. Steck, FAT 4; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 126–145, 133–134.

of marriage and the ensuing provision for the wife are images for the prospering during nationhood. Consequently, the descriptions of adultery in its various forms represent the infidelity of Israel, who is accused both of political and cultic defection from Yhwh. In the imagery of Ezek 16, the sexual violation of the unfaithful wife symbolizes the destruction of Jerusalem and the ensuing exile of the people, interpreted as a rightful punishment for Israel's iniquities. In a linguistic perversion of the woman's offenses, the divine husband rapes her in front of her lovers (16:37).

3.2. Sisters in Adultery: Ohola and Oholiba in Ezek 23

The topic of sexual violence as an image of exile recurs in the second chapter of the book that similarly employs the prophetic marriage metaphor for an allegorical review of biblical history. This time, however, we deal with two women, namely the sisters Oholah and Oholibah, who represent the two capital cities of the northern and the southern kingdom, Samaria and Jerusalem. The whole chapter can be divided into three parts, starting from the sisters' time of harlotry in Egypt (23:1–4), while the second and third part deal with the sisters in turn, starting with the infidelity of Oholah in 23:5–10, and then focusing on Oholibah in 23:11–49. However, there is some agreement that the original oracle is confined to 23:1–27, while the further speech units in 23:28–49 represent later additions.[33]

Different to the account in Ezek 16, the storyline skips the womens' childhood and starts with their time of harlotry in Egypt (23:3: וַתִּזְנֶינָה בְּמִצְרַיִם), before both of them become Yhwh's wives (23:1–4). The following part deals with the infidelity of Oholah, describing her acting promiscuously both with the Assyrians (23:5–7) and the Egyptians (23:8), for which the husband punishes her by delivering her to her lovers. Not only do the Assyrians take away her children and finally kill her, but before that they assault the woman sexually by uncovering her nakedness (23:10: גִּלּוּ עֶרְוָתָהּ). Again, the specific use of the verb גלה *pi^{c}el* in the context of a punishment suggests that the text describes, how Oholah is exposed to gang-rape by the hands of her former lovers. Yet Ezek 23:10 differs from the account in Ezek 16 in the role that Yhwh plays himself: In Ezek 23, he is not "the one who directly performs the rape, but 'only' the judge who passes sentence on the 'woman' Jerusalem and leaves the carrying out of the punishment to the ex-lovers".[34]

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[33] See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (see FN 9), 480–481; L. C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48* (WBC 29; Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 45–48, and K.-F. Pohlmann, *Der Prophet Hesekiel/Ezechiel: Kapitel 20–48* (ATD 22,2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2001), 336–340; similar Krüger, *Geschichtskonzepte* (see FN 6), 143, who, however, assumes an original core in verses 23:1–30.

[34] Baumann, *Love* (see FN 5), 159.

However, the main focus of the chapter is on the second sister, Oholibah, whose fate is described at length in the second half 23:11–49. Oholibah has been a witness to her sister's fate (23:11), but she follows the same path and even surpasses Samaria in her "chronic nymphomania"[35] (23:11–21). She engages with different groups of male figures, symbolizing the consecutive involvements with foreign nations in biblical history. First, Oholibah is filled with desire for the handsome young Assyrians, to whom she is drawn because of their magnificent clothing (23:12: לְבֻשֵׁי מִכְלוֹל). Later, however, she is attracted by the Babylonians after seeing them on wall paintings (23:15–18), before she resumes the love affair of her youth with the Egyptians, whose bodily attractions are described in sexually unambiguous terms (23:19–21). The expression that she uncovered her nakedness (23:18: וַתְּגַל אֶת־עֶרְוָתָהּ) in her dealings with the Egyptians, which uses גלה *pi^{c}el* in combination with the noun עֶרְוָה, leaves no doubt that her adultery is consummated by sexual intercourse, which is the final reason for her husband to turn from her, as he turned from her sister Oholah before (23:18: וַתֵּקַע נַפְשִׁי מֵעָלֶיהָ).

The husband's punitive measures in 23:22–34 roughly represent a reversal of the woman's promiscuous activities and divide into three parts, of which, however, only the punishment outlined in the first oracle 23:22–27 constitutes the original continuation.[36] Here, the divine husband announces that he will send the former lovers against his wife, whom he will empower as instruments of his indignation (23:15) to judge the woman "according to their laws" (23:24: וּשְׁפָטוּךְ בְּמִשְׁפְּטֵיהֶם). The judgement provides for humiliation, as the former lovers will facially mutilate the female (23:25), and strip off her clothes and jewelry (23:26). The later addition of a second judgement oracle in 23:28–30 carries forward the original punitive action and enters into a description of sexual abuse: The divine husband first repeats that the woman's former lovers will seize all her property and possessions, so that she will be left bare and naked (23:29: וְעָזְבוּךְ עֵירֹם וְעֶרְיָה). Yet this punitive act is continued with the announcement that the woman's whorish shame will be uncovered (23:29: וְנִגְלְתָה[37] עֶרְוַת זְנוּנַיִךְ). As a passive, the *niph^{c}al* verbal form of

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[35] Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48* (see FN 33), 41, who uses the expression as heading for the commentary on chapter Ezek 23 as a whole.

[36] On the secondary character of 23:28–30 and 23:31–34 see Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (see FN 9), 490; similarly Pohlmann, *Ezechiel 20–48* (see FN 33), 339–340.

[37] Following most commentators, the *perfect consecutivum* masculine singular (וְנִגְלָה) should be emendated to a feminine singular (וְנִגְלְתָה), assuming a scribal omission, even though we do not have material evidence for this reading (see Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* [see FN 9], 476; M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 22; Garden City: Doubleday, 1997], 483; Pohlmann, *Ezechiel 20–48* [see FN 33], 337).

גלה in this verse does not indicate by itself, who is carrying out the act of punishment, but the context suggests strongly that the female figure is violated by her ex-lovers, on the command of the divine husband. Different to the parallel occurrences in 16:36–37 and 23:10, however, the noun עֶרְוָה occurs as a construct together with the noun זְנוּנִים ("prostitution"). It has been suggested that the Hebrew expression גלה עֶרְוָה in this case refers to the genitals as the seat of shame,[38] rather than being a euphemism for sexual intercourse. To my mind, however, the parallel use of the verb גלה *niph^{c}al* in 16:36 can be used as evidence to suggest a similar understanding in 23:29. Thus, the formulation indicates that – in a perversion of Oholibah's previous sexual promiscuity –the female figure will be gang-raped by her former lovers, whom the husband has gathered around her.[39] This understanding can be supported further by the argument that is fulfills the (implicit) expectation that Oholibah will suffer the same punishment as her sister (see the violation of Oholah in 23:10). This expectation is further confirmed in the later addition of the Song of the Cup in 23:31–34, which states that – as Oholibah followed the path of her sister – she will have to endure the same punishment (23:31).

To sum up, the metaphorical speech in Ezek 23 shares major characteristics with chapter 16 such as employing the marriage metaphor for an allegorical review of biblical history and referring to a model of retributive judgement, when the sexual humiliation and violation of the female figure is directly linked to her previous adulterous behaviour. However, there are some differences. First, the allegorical dimension is much more elaborated, allowing for a clear interpretation of the adulterous acts of the personified cities as metaphors for the events that – in the eyes of the biblical authors – led to the demise of the two kingdoms of Israel (722 BCE) and Judah (587 BCE).[40] In addition, Ezek 23 represents the higher systematized account. While in Ezek 16, accusations of cultic and political infidelity are mixed, the depiction in Ezek 23 focuses on political transgressions, emphasizing the allegorical function of the chapter. Thus, the fate of the two sisters becomes transparent for the demise of the two kingdoms that is explained by their folly to rely on political alliances with foreign nations instead of trusting

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[38] Baumann, *Love* (see FN 5), 159, on Ezek 23:29: "Here, unlike 16:36 and 23:10, ערוה probably refers to the genitals. The word is more specifically qualified by the substantives for 'whoredom' (זנות, זמה, and תזנות) so frequently used by Ezekiel, and indeed is more or less saddled with being the organ in which everything shameful is gathered together and can be looked upon."

[39] See Lipka, *Sexual Transgressions* (see FN 19), 234.

[40] See Krüger, *Geschichtskonzepte* (see FN 19), 139–195; Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19* (see FN 14), 234–244; Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48* (see FN 33), 48–52; Pohlmann, *Ezechiel 20–48* (see FN 33), 339–340, and G. Baumann, *Gottesbilder der Gewalt im Alten Testament verstehen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006), 115–117.

into the relationship with Yhwh. Portraying these political moves as adultery, both the Assyrian and the Babylonian exile are described in terms of sexual violence, to which the divine husband exposes his wives. The marriage metaphor in Ezek 23 is, however, less detailed, skipping the initial care and provision of the husband and focusing on the transgression of the female figure(s) instead.[41] Apparently, the reader is supposed to fill these gaps by assuming the marriage relations in Ezek 16, which together with the higher systematization suggests that Ezek 23 is in its basic form a later continuation of the extended metaphor in Ezek 16.

4. The verb גלה and Sexual Violence in the Prophets

Further to the two allegories in Ezek 16 and 23, there are four other occurrences in the biblical Prophets, where the Hebrew verb גלה is used in a metaphorical description of sexual violence against a female figure, namely Hos 2:12; Nah 3:5; Isa 47:3, and Jer 13:22.[42] Among these, Jer 13:22 is of special importance, as I want to demonstrate that the motif in 13:22 attests to a redactional re-interpretation of the preceding announcement of exile in Jer 13:19.

Jer 13:22 is part of a collection of prophetic oracles in Jer 13:18–27 that divides into four parts in 13:18–19, 20–22, 23–24, and 25–27. The shared imagery of the shamed woman in 13:20–22 and 13:25–27 suggests an original connection between these two parts that further share in the address of a female figure (13:20–27*)[43]. With regard to the other units, however, there is some evidence for a process of literary continuation: The prophecy in Jer 13:18–19 forms the basic oracle that first announces the demise for king and queen mother (13:18), which in the following is related to the end of the southern kingdom of Judah. Here, the author states in 13:19 that the whole of Judah has been led into exile, employing twice the *hoph^{c}al* binyan of the verb גלה as *terminus technicus* (13:19: הָגְלָת יְהוּדָה כֻּלָּהּ הָגְלָת שְׁלוֹמִים).[44] In the

[41] For a comprehensive comparison of the marriage metaphor in Ezek 16 and 23 see N. Stienstra, *YHWH is the Husband of His People: Analysis of a Biblical Metaphor with Special Reference to Translation* (Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1993), 155–161.

[42] For a detailed analysis and comparison of these verses as part of the prophetic texts in Hos 2:4–17; Nah 3:1–7; Isa 47:1–4 and Jer 13: 18–27 see my forthcoming publication Klein, "Clothing" (see FN 5).

[43] On the connection between 13:20–22 and 13:25–27 see – with different arguments, though – W. Rudolph, *Jeremia* (HAT I/12; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1947), 82–83, and W. McKane, *Jeremiah: Vol I: Introduction and Commentary on Jeremiah I–XXV* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), 307.

[44] While the verb הָגְלָת is a feminine singular, the noun שְׁלוֹמִים is masculine plural, explained by P. Joüon/T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (SubBi 27; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2006) § 150e, with the people being regarded as a collection.

continuation 13:20–27* the address changes to a 2. person feminine, who can be identified with personified Zion/Jerusalem.[45] The female figure is first called to lift up her eyes (13:20: שְׂאִי עֵינַיִךְ וּרְאִי)[46] and witness the arrival of a group from the north, which recalls the advance of the foe from the north (Jer 4–6). She is then mocked for the loss of her flock (13:20) and blamed for having forged her own destiny, as she herself instructed 'confidants' (13:21: אַלָּפִים) that will now rule over her. Her punishment is in 13:22 described in no uncertain terms: "And when you say in your heart: Why have these things happened to me? Because of the abundance of your iniquity have your skirt hems been uncovered, and your heels have been violated (נִגְלוּ שׁוּלַיִךְ נֶחְמְסוּ עֲקֵבָיִךְ)."[47] The undressing of the female figure serves as a

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[45] K. Schmid, *Buchgestalten des Jeremiabuches: Untersuchungen zur Redaktions- und Rezeptionsgeschichte von Jer 30–33 im Kontext des Buches* (WMANT 72; Neukirchen-vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1996), 330–340, has furnished further proof for the assumption that 13:20ff. represents a later continuation of 13:18–19 by classifying 13:20–22 with a number of similar examples, in which the earlier prophecies in the book are later supplemented with theological commentaries, making the continuation in Jer 13:20ff. part of a wider, conceptually-linked redactional activity in the book.

[46] The reading prefers the imperatives 2. feminine singular of the *K^{e}tiv*, while the *Q^{e}re* (שְׂאוּ, וּרְאוּ) can be explained as an assimilation to the previous context, assuming a subject masculine plural (see L. C. Allen, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* [OTL; Westminster: John Knox, 2008], 162, and W. L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 1–25* [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986], 411). There remains, though, the incongruence of the initial imperative 2. feminine singular שאי with the object עיניכם, which then requires an emendation (see already Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 80; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 307, and P. C. Craigie/ P. H. Kelley/J. F. jun. Drinkard, *Jeremiah 1–25* (WBC 26; Dallas: Word Books, 1991).

[47] The understanding of the expression נִגְלוּ שׁוּלַיִךְ requires some discussion. As the noun שׁוּל generally describes something that is hanging down, it has the two basic meanings 'seams' and 'pubic region of a woman' (see HALOT; Gesenius[18]). The eleven occurrences in the Hebrew Bible appear both in a cultic context (see Exod 28:33[2], 34; 39:24, 25, 26: Isa 6:1) and in the context of sexual violence (Jer 13:22; 26; Lam 1:9; Nah 3:5). While in a cultic context, the term refers clearly to the lower border of a garment, the 'hem', there is some discussion about the understanding in the context of sexual violence, where it can stand both for the (female) genitalia and the garment that covers them (see the overview by Baumann, *Love* [see FN 5], 52–55).

As the verb גלה can denote both a direct object (that what is 'uncovered') and an indirect object (that what is 'taken away'), Jer 13:22 could be understood either way: "your skirt hems/genitals have been uncovered" (see Baumann, *Love* [see FN 5], 52, 118). However, as the close parallel in Nah 3:5 (וְגִלֵּיתִי שׁוּלַיִךְ עַל־פָּנָיִךְ) seems to suggest that a garment is lifted up by its hem to expose the female up to her face, I have opted for a similar translation in Jer 13:22; similar Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 80 ("ist deine Schleppe aufgedeckt"); Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 302 ("that your skirts are lifted up"); McKane, *Jeremiah*, 306 ("your skirts are lifted"); differently G. Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25* (HThK.AT; Freiburg i.Br: Herder, 2005), 447, who opts for a translation that refers to uncovering the female ("wurde aufgedeckt deine Scham").

prelude to sexual abuse, which is described as a violation of the female's heels – a clear euphemism for sexual violence.[48] Due to the passive verb forms, it is unclear, who is the perpetrator of the violation in 13:22, yet the key is in the previous verse 13:21 that indicates that the woman got involved with 'confidants' that she taught herself (13:21: וְאַתְּ לִמַּדְתְּ אֹתָם). Firstly, the verb למד ("to teach") is in Jeremiah used to describe that the people have forgotten Yhwh and became accustomed to transgressions and idolatries of the nations;[49] in particular, in Jer 2:33 Zion/Jerusalem is accused of having habitually looked for love (למדתי).[50] Secondly, the noun אַלּוּף ('confidant') serves in Jer 3:4 as a honorary title, with which the adulterous female addresses Yhwh, when she ruefully returns to him. This suggests that the noun in 13:21 denotes the woman's lovers, for whom she has initially left the divine husband. Hence the imagery in 13:22 should be interpreted against the background of the prophetic marriage metaphor, implying that Yhwh will expose Zion/Jerusalem to sexual violence by the hand of her former lovers, whom she foolishly mistook as confidants.[51] That the marriage metaphor stands in the background of the oracle is even more prominent in its continuation 13:25–27, where Yhwh accuses the woman of adultery, neighing, and whoring (13:27: נֶאֱפַיִךְ וּמִצְהֲלוֹתַיִךְ זִמַּת זְנוּתֵךְ), drawing on central accusations against the female in previous chapters of the book (Jer 2–3) and attributing her alleged crimes explicit sexual connotations.[52] Furthermore, the punishment of the female figure through sexual violence continues in the motif that Yhwh himself will expose her to sexual humiliation (13:26).[53]

To sum up, what is remarkable about the prophecy in Jer 13:18–27 is that the different use of the verbal root גלה in the productive growth of the oracle demonstrates the re-interpretation of exile in terms of sexual violence. While in the original oracle 13:18–19 גלה *hoph^{c}al* denotes how Judah was led into the Babylonian exile, the author of the continuation in 13:20–27* employs

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[48] On the "heels" (עָקֵב) as a euphemism for the (female) genitals see the corresponding entries in Gesenius[17]/Gesenius[18] and HALOT; further, H.-J. Zobel, Art. "עקב," *TDOT* XI (2001): 315–320, 316–317; Baumann, *Love* (see FN 5), 119–120. Similarly, P. Gordon/H. C. Washington, "Rape as a Military Metaphor," in *A Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets* (ed. A. Brenner; The Feminist Companion to the Bible 8; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 316, argue for an understanding of sexual violence: "Jer 13.20–27 describe the attack of Jerusalem as a rape."

[49] See Jer 9:4, 13; 10:2; 12:16.

[50] On this reading and interpretation see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1* (see FN 46), 56, 109–110.

[51] Differently, Baumann, *Love* (see FN 5), 120, interprets Jer 13:22 with reference to the following verse 13:26, assuming that Yhwh himself is the perpetrator of sexual violence and not only the one initiating it.

[52] See Baumann, *Love* (see FN 5), 121–122.

[53] See on this Klein, "Clothing" (see FN 5); further Holladay, *Jeremiah 1* (see FN 46), 416; R. P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (OTL; London: SCM Press, 1986), 303.

the *niph^{c}al* binyan to describe sexual violence against personified Zion/Jerusalem. This prophecy is the only text in the Hebrew Bible, in which the exilic connotation of גלה II occurs next to גלה I with a sexual connotation. This suggests that the author of the later continuation in 13:20–27* deliberately plays with the two meanings of the same root, when he interprets the Babylonian exile using the idea of sexual violence against a female figure.[54] Thus, the productive growth of Jer 13:18–19, 20–27* can be understood as the literary origin for the interpretation of exile in the image of sexual violence. The key for this exegesis lies in the double meaning of the Hebrew root גלה as "to go into exile" and "to uncover" together with the prophetic marriage metaphor. Apparently, the deportation of the people from their land has been connected with the uncovering of personified Zion/Jerusalem,[55] which qualifies the motif of sexual violence against a female figure as an image of exile in prophetic literature.

5. Exile as Sexual Violence

So far, I have demonstrated that it is most likely the two different meanings of the Hebrew root גלה that first led to the image of exile as sexual violence in the productive growth of Jer 13:18–27. This image of exile has later been reworked in the comprehensive allegories of biblical history in Ezek 16 and 23, where the punishment of the adulterous wives culminates in their rape and sexual humiliation.

There remains the question, how to deal with these texts, which, I am convinced, Phyllis Trible would happily class with her Texts of Terror, "from whose bourn no traveler returns unscarred".[56] Let me sketch out three hermeneutical notions that I find essential when reading Ezek 16 and 23. Firstly, the texts operate within the scheme of cause and effect, drawing on the anthropological codes of honour and shame. Ancient Israel was a mainly group-oriented society, which shared in the conventions of honour and shame that prevailed in the Mediterranean society. Even though honour/shame vocabulary is mostly absent in Ezek 16 and 23, it can be shown that the texts draw on these anthropological codes, which have proved to be

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[54] Similarly, Fischer, *Jeremia*, 462, sees the connection between the double use of the verb גלה in Jer 13:19, 22 and comments on Jer 13:22: "Dabei entsteht über das Verb גלה eine Beziehung mit V 19 (…). Erinnerung und Entblößung werden so miteinander verbunden."

[55] On this connection see already H.-J. Zobel, Art. "גָּלָה," *TDOT* II (1975): 47688, 478: "Emigration or exile can be understood as an uncovering of the land", and Baumann, "Gott," 114: "Im Wort גלה verbindet sich die Entblößung einer Frau mit der Deportation einer Bevölkerung."

[56] P. Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Ouvertures to Biblical Theology; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 2.

a useful model to assess social relationships in the Hebrew Bible.[57] As the anthropological codes of honour and shame are closely linked with sexual relations and gender roles, the marriage metaphor allowed the biblical authors to transfer existing cultural preconceptions about what is appropriate male and female behaviour onto the relationship between Yhwh and the female figure, and thus to reflect on biblical history.[58] In the same way that a wife, who commits adultery, destroys the honour of her husband by impugning his masculinity,[59] Israel has shamed Yhwh by worshipping other gods and entering into political alliances with foreign nations. And in the same way that a shamed husband has certain powers of control over his wife to re-establish his honour, the divine husband exposes his metaphorical wife to shame as a punishment for the people's idolatries and their political follies. Since the female figures in Ezek 16 and 23 are guilty of adultery, amplified to a nymphomaniac frenzy, in the logic of the texts, they have brought the violent punishment on their own head. In particular, the mention of laws in both Ezek 16:38 and 23:45 shows that the biblical authors have tried to paint the picture of a retributive judgement.[60] However, while punitive acts such as facial mutilation (cf. Ezek 23:25) or stoning (23:47) are documented occasionally as punishments for adultery,[61] the excessive sexual humiliation and attack, culminating in the act of rape (Ezek 16:37; 23:10, 29) is without parallel.

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[57] See S. A. Brayford, "To Shame or not to Shame: Sexuality in the Mediterranean Diaspora," *Semeia* 68 (1996): 163–176, 163; further L. M. Bechtel, "Shame as Sanction of Social Control in Biblical Israel: Judicial, Political and Social Shaming," *JSOT* 49 (1991): 47–76; Stiebert, *Construction* (see FN 31), 25–86; S. Hadijev, "Honor and Shame" in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets* (ed. M. Boda/J. G. McConville; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012), 333–338, and with specific regard to the Book of Ezekiel, D. Y. Wu, *Honor, Shame, and Guilt: Social-Scientific Approaches to the Book of Ezekiel* (BBR Supplements 14; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 5–56. See also Klein, "Clothing" (see FN 5).

[58] See Hadijev, "Honor" (see FN 57), 337.

[59] See C. Delaney, "Seeds of Honor, Fields of Shame," in *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean* (ed. D. D. Gilmore; A Special Publication of the American Anthropological Association 22; Washington, DC: American Anthropological Association, 1987), 35–48, 40–43; M. J. Giovannini, "Female Chastity Codes in the Circum-Mediterranean: Comparative Perspective," in *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean* (ed. D. D. Gilmore; A Special Publication of the American Anthropological Association 22; Washington, DC: American Anthropological Association, 1987), 61–74, 68; K. Stone, *Sex, Honor, and Power in the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup 234; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 44, 142–144.

[60] This has frequently been pointed out, see e.g. Krüger, *Geschichtskonzepte* (see FN 19), 188–192; Baumann, *Love* (see FN 5), 143; Stiebert, *Construction* (see FN 31), 146; Lipka, *Sexual Transgression* (see FN 19), 153.

[61] See Baumann, *Gottesbilder* (see FN 40), 118.

This leads over to the second point, the use of rhetorical devices in these texts. Even though the violent punishment seems excessive and stretches the conventions and laws about a marriage relation, it can be explained as part of the metaphor.[62] Ezek 16 and 23 in their literary form are indeed scenes from a marriage, but they have to be understood as allegorical compositions that are devised to reflect on biblical history. It is especially the historical trauma of the capture of Jerusalem in 587 BCE and the ensuing exile that occasioned wide parts of the prophetic literature, and lie at the core of the marriage metaphor in Ezek 16 and 23.[63] To demonstrate the devastating impact of these historical events, the ancient authors supplemented the marriage metaphor with further motifs and imagery. First of all, the idea of undressing has also a background in military warfare, where it was common practice to strip captives off their protective clothing, and to expose them to shame in order to gain control over them.[64] Thus, exposing the nakedness of the female figures in Ezek 16 and 23 functions as an image for the shame of military defeat and especially the fall of Jerusalem.[65]

Furthermore, the violence against the female figure goes back to the fact that cities in the west-Semitic region were female and could be personified; thus, especially the Mesopotamian genre of city lament employed violence against city and city goddess as a means to depict military action and destruction.[66] Thus, to a certain degree, the violence against the woman in the prophetic marriage metaphor can be understood as a transformation of the figure of the violated female in the Mesopotamian city laments:The specific quality of the personification allowed the audience of the prophetic texts to

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[62] Similarly Lipka, *Transgression* (see FN 19), 153, on the motifs of rape and sexual violation in the Prophets: "However, as part of a metaphor, these punishments, representative of the invasion and pillaging of Judah and Israel and the conquest and exile of their people, makes perfect sense."

[63] See Baumann, *Love* (see FN 5), 226–228, and Baumann, *Gottesbilder* (see FN 40), 123.

[64] See Bechtel, "Shame" (see FN 57), 62–67; Baumann, *Gottesbilder* (see FN 40), 117–120.

[65] Similarly Stiebert, *Construction* (see FN 31), 101–102.

[66] On the religious-historical background see A. Fitzgerald, "The Mythological Background for the Presentation of Jerusalem as a Queen and False Worship as Adultery in the OT," *CBQ* 34 (1972): 403–416; M. Biddle, "The Figure of Lady Jerusalem: Identification, Deification, and Personification of Cities in the Ancient Near East," in *The Biblical Canon in Comparative Perspective* (ed. K. Lawson et alii; Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 1991), 173–194; Steck, "Zion" (see FN 32), 47–59; Maier, "Jerusalem" (see FN 5), 87–88; M. Wischnowsky, *Tochter Zion: Aufnahme und Überwindung der Stadtklage in den Prophetenschriften des Alten Testaments* (WMANT 89; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001), 13–45, 266, and Baumann, *Gottesbilder* (see FN 40), 117–121.

emphasise with the female, and to identify with the judgement against her.[67] It is because the audience understood that such acts of violence were devastating for the female victim that the depiction is powerful and can demonstrate the traumatic effect of the events in 587 BCE and the ensuing exile that – in the eyes of the biblical authors – destroyed the core of city, land, and nation.

Finally, it is easy to understand why texts such as Ezek 16 and 23 have engendered various criticism, pertaining the problematic nature of the depiction of violence, or their use of fixed gender roles that differ decisively from our present understanding.[68] However, it should be stressed that these texts are not intended to comment on or give guidance on gender or marriage relations,[69] but their authors employ the motifs of marriage and sexual violence as literary devices to process the traumatic events in the history of Israel. It is finally noteworthy that the use of the marriage metaphor in these texts pertains to the people of Israel as a whole, and – considering that the political and religious leadership was predominantly male – one can even suggest that they were written for a male readership. These men were called to experience in their relationship to their God a type of shame that on a purely social level is appropriate only for females.[70] It has, however, been pointed out rightly that the inclusive nature of the imagery is "easily lost",[71] and from a reader's perspective, the metaphors in Ezek 16 and 23 remain uncomfortable, if not repulsive texts. The chapters can thus be appreciated as theological coping strategies of their times, but only after deconstructing their imagery and the anthropological codes that they draw on. Only then can the metaphor of sexual violence been interpreted as an image of exile.

In summary, sexual violence in Ezek 16 and 23 serves to depict exile as the ultimate repudiation and violent exposure of Israel by their God Yhwh. As such, the texts are drastic witnesses for the significant impact of the exile on the literary production in the Hebrew Bible, and for how biblical authors

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[67] See Steck, "Zion" (see FN 32), 133, who describes this relationship between the personified city and the people as not one of identity, but as one of relation ("nicht als symbolische Identität, sondern als Relation"); see further the concluding remarks by Wischnowsky, *Tochter Zion* (see FN 66), 166–272, 272–274.

[68] See exemplary the review of scholarship in Baumann, *Love* (see FN 5), 7–26; with regard to the imagery in Ezekiel further van Dijk-Hemmes, "Metaphorization" (see FN 5), 162–170; K. P. Darr, "Ezekiel's Justifications of God: Teaching Troubling Texts," *JSOT* 55 (1992): 97–117, and Magdalene, "Treaty Curses" (see FN 27), esp. 349–352.

[69] It is thus a misreading of these texts, when the author of the late supplementation in Ezek 23:46–48 turns the imagery into an admonition of "all the women" (23:48: כָּל־הַנָּשִׁים) in the land, who are advised to take the fate of Oholah and Oholibah as a warning; see also Darr, "Ezekiel's Justification" (see FN 68), 115.

[70] See Hadijev, "Honor" (see FN 57), 337.

[71] Darr, "Ezekiel's Justification" (see FN 68), 115.

transformed language and traditions to come to terms with this traumatic event and its aftermaths.